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UNITED STATES ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY

January 21, 1971

MEMORANDUM

TO : The Director

FROM : ACDA/ST - Spurgeon M. Keeny, Jr. *pmk*

SUBJECT: Venting from AEC Nuclear Test of December 18, 1970
(BANE BERRY)

As detailed in the attached memcon, the Canadians reported having detected radioactive debris attributable to venting from the U.S. nuclear test BANE BERRY of December 18, 1970. The Canadian representation was oral and in low key, and they affirmed that the Canadian government had no intention to make a formal protest or to conceive of the event as a violation of the LTBT. Nevertheless, the representation is noteworthy in that it marks the first time a foreign government, other than the USSR, has officially approached the U.S. government concerning the detection beyond U.S. borders of radioactivity debris from a U.S. nuclear test.

In the meantime, the AEC has suspended further testing at the Nevada Test Site until it has reviewed the BANE BERRY test in detail and is convinced that every reasonable precaution has been initiated to reduce the probability of a similar future occurrence. Chairman Seaborg's memorandum for members of the NSC Undersecretaries Committee, dated January 11, 1971, stated that the AEC hopes to complete this review by the end of January 1971, however, discussions with the AEC staff this morning indicated that testing will be suspended until at least 1 March 1971.

The release of radioactivity from BANE BERRY began at approximately H+3.5 minutes, from a crack in the earth, opening up after detonation in a southwesternly direction from the emplacement hole. Although it is too early to determine the

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cause of radioactive release, two possibilities which are being investigated are (1) an anomalous geologic situation or (2) unexpectedly high yield from the device.

The venting was rather widely publicized. The Environmental Protection Agency stated that radioactivity was traced to the Canadian border at International Falls, Minnesota, but presented no health effects.

The Soviets, on January 6, 1971, made an oral representation on this venting, but did not claim to have detected radioactive debris from it.

Attachment:

As stated.

ACDA/ST:PJLong:ml

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